

African American Recruitment and Retainment in the Honors College

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Muncie, Indiana**

April 2018

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2018

Abstract

There is a need for the Ball State University's Honors College to recruit and retain African American students within their program because of the positive effect ethnic diversity can add to the classroom environment. Using the Dewey Reflective Thinking Process, I explain how the lack of relationships for current African American students within the program is the problem with the Honors College's recruitment and retainment of African American students. I list possible solutions for how to solve this problem before evaluating them and deciding the best solution. Additionally, an implementation plan to take action in solving this problem.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Eric Harvey, for being understanding, supportive, and most importantly excited about my thesis. Without his encouragement, I think my ideas would have stayed in my head and I wouldn't have felt like I needed to do this project.

Within the Honors College, I would like to thank Dean Emert for providing me with information as well as resources to complete my thesis, his assistant, Coralee Young, for sending out my recruitment emails through illness, and the Student Honors Council President, Maren Orchard, for seeing the need for this research as beneficial for the Honors College and eager to meet and discuss the results of my research. Plus, Dean Ruebel for allowing me to enter the Honors College as a freshman.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mom who gave me the power to keep working and finish my thesis.

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Process Analysis Statement

For a period of time, I knew that it was very important for me to do a project that would focus on African American students because I wanted to ensure that others like me could find success in college. I brewed on this idea and decided that the focus of African American student success should be within the Honors College at Ball State because there were not many African American students in the program. I saw that the need for more African American students within the Honors College would have been beneficial to my experience and the program.

Originally, I thought that a marketing strategy to recruit more African American students to the Honors College would be the best way to achieve this goal. After talking to my advisor who was my former marketing professor, he said that a marketing strategy may not be the right thing for the project. In the Fall, I took a professional communication course where I learned about the Dewey Reflective Thinking Process and decided that it may be a good approach to the topic. The Dewey Reflective Thinking Process also related more to my major and me feel more comfortable in approaching the topic of recruitment and retainment of African Americans through a communication method. My advisor got 110% behind the idea and the plan and carried excitement for the project that was more than anticipated. Their energy for the project was very helpful especially in times when I doubted my ability to do the thesis correctly.

The start of the project began as a sprint as I took a week to submit my proposal, have my meeting, and get the course registered for the Fall semester. From there the pace slowed as the school closed for winter break and I went home to work and relax. When school started back in January I immediately met with my advisor within the first couple of weeks to establish a timeline and a course of action. The timeline was a very aggressive push to have a final draft submitted by April 11th with deadlines for different parts along the way. I thought I would be

able to meet these assigned days and liked that they were in place so that there were milestones to be achieved. Ultimately, the timeline was broken when I could not meet the first deadline with 20 credit hours I was taking in the first five weeks of class on top of doing organizational commitments. There were also meeting time changes that occurred so the consistent check-ins with my advisor did not always take place as planned. However, I knew the big deadline and worked my best to meet it.

One thing that helped me tremendously in this project were other theses projects completed at different schools with a similar topic to mine. These theses projects provided me with a guide to what research I should look at as well as how I should conduct my own research at Ball State. I went back and forth about whether or not I should conduct my own research at Ball State and that decision even contributed to the delay in the timeline of the project. When I did decide to conduct research on Ball State's campus, it took two weeks to get approval and then a week to recruit students. I was happy when one student responded to the email but I know if I made the decision earlier, there may have been time to recruit other students.

Information from Ball State and people at Ball State serve as the basis for this research because it is important to have information about the location and how my research impacts it. Going through this process and providing Ball State's Honors College at least with an initial plan of action means a lot to me because I hope to return and see the change on campus.

When I entered the freshmen honors residency hall in the Fall of 2014 it became very easy for me to identify the other students that looked like me in the 2018 class of Honors College students. One was my roommate, another could have possibly been a boy I met during a summer bridge program, the other was his friend and lastly there was another male my roommate and I saw a few weeks later into the first semester. When I say that the others looked like me I am referring to the fact that they could have identified themselves as African American or black as I did. My roommate and I would joke that we could count the number of black (African American) students on one hand in the Honors College but in my findings, I found this to be true.

In the Fall of 2014 the Honors College only enrolled five students in the Fall of 2014 identified as African American, 2 females and 3 males (J. Emert, personal communication, January 17, 2018). All the people I encountered and myself. From the Fall of 2014 to the Fall of 2017, the Ball State Honors College has seen an increase in the number of students that identify as African American. This is consistent to Ball State statistics that show an increase in the enrollment of undergraduate African American students on campus from the Fall of 2014 to Fall of 2017 (Ball State University Factbook, n.d.).

As an involved student on campus and familiar with predominately white institutions (PWIs), the lack of other African American students in my classes and overall environment did not bother me. However, while in college I developed more of an awareness of being an African American student and how my experiences due to the color of my skin were different from the majority.

Within the Honors College most courses center that I took centered around discussions. As the only African American student in most of these classes, I noticed how my opinions about a reading differed from that of my peers. My opinions tended to shift discussions and present

perspectives that the other students, mainly white, would not think to discuss. At times, I felt isolated not many people could relate to my claims or understand me. It also made me feel defensive because of a few offensive remarks made.

In one of my honors courses, I took it upon myself to apply the Zen method to the Black Lives Matter Movement. For this project, I sat in the Atrium on two separate days equipped in all black, a blindfold and a board that read "how is me sitting here make you feel?" On the first day I raised my fist in the air to symbolize black power and on the second day I did not raise my fist. People engaged with me on both days by writing on my board. When it came time to present the projects, everyone liked my project, but no further discussion ensued on what I thought was a powerful and relevant message. Even the professor did not comment much on my project in class but later posted along with my grade these comments:

"I didn't get a chance to say this in class, but there's a long history of Buddhist monks sitting for peace and also doing more dramatic forms of sitting protest (such as self-immolation to protest the war in Vietnam). Not that you need my recognition, but I'm really proud of what you did and I'm glad others were moved by it as well."

I recall another distinctive time in one of my honors classes where a professor pointed to me and said, "well she's black," because a student made some offensive remark. In that instance, I needed to have someone else in the room who looked like me. Another student that looked like me would have made the situation feel less lonely. In response to the professor's remark, I blurted out the fact that the following semester there would be two of us [African American students] in the same class. After class the teacher inquired more about my statement to see if it were valid and mentioned something along the lines of "darn, I need at least one chip in each class."

The later story is mentioned within this paper not to say that the professor is a racist or anything, but more so to point out the need within the Honors College to do more in their recruitment of African American students. Then after the college has recruited the students, retain them within the program to help support current African American students, prompt reflection of a different perspective and challenge forms of thought. This body of research is presented to assist the Honors College through the Dewey Reflective Thinking Process to find a way to achieve the recruitment and retainment of African American Students.

Dewey Reflective Thinking Process

The Dewey Reflective Thinking Process is a method for problem-solving in five steps.

The five steps are:

1. Describing and analyzing the problem
2. Generating possible solutions
3. Evaluating all solutions
4. Deciding on the solution
5. Planning how to implement the solution.

The paper will be divided into these five steps to help the Honors College realize how they can improve their recruitment and retainment of African American students. Dewey's Reflective Thinking Process is being used for this body of research because it incorporates my background in Communication Studies and provides the Honors College with an understanding of what they can do to move forward.

Describing and Analyzing the Problem

On a predominately white campus, African Americans experience cultural bias, discrimination, issues with identity, isolation, and additional obstacles created by their

professors. These issues arise because since the desegregation of colleges and universities in the 1960s little has been done by white administrators, faculty members, staff and students to show a willingness to incorporate black interests, values, or history into the core of campus culture (Feagin & Sikes, 1995). African American students are then inclined to have to work harder, handle more stressors, and find community to overcome such obstacles when matriculating through college. An African American student that is then identified as being smart such as one enrolled in an honors program, face the tendency of being overly praised by whites and as the main representative and voice of the black community (Feagin & Sikes, 1995).

Furthermore, African American students are subjected to an unfair assumption that they should assimilate into a predominately white university without changes being made to the academic structures and programs (Fleming, 1985). Additionally, there is no flexibility in helping meet the needs of African American students in their advanced years of higher education as there are when recruiting efforts are made. The inflexibility therefore reduces the retainment of African American students.

Ball State University is not the only college to face issues in addressing the recruitment and retainment of African American students in honors programs. In fact, research studies were conducted at both Western Kentucky University and Eastern Michigan University to understand and address African American honor students. The research information presented by Brandie Bentley for their senior thesis at Eastern Michigan University was used to formulate my own interview with an African American student within Ball State's Honors College (2017). Bentley's research allowed me to adapt a recruitment email, a more detailed email, a demographic questionnaire, questions, and an informed consent form.

Through the adaptations of Bentley's research and approval through Ball State University's IRB board, I was able to recruit one African American student through a Ball State Honors College email blast. The interview was conducted in the office of my faculty advisor and lasted approximately twenty-five minutes with a recording made and later transcribed.

During the interview, the student participant mentioned the noticeable lack of African American students in their honors classes and how that impacted their experience within the Honors College.

"Even just within the classroom I don't know if there has been any other black person in any of my honors classes so that is also a disadvantage because usually when I go to classes I migrate to other African American students and when there are none, I am kind of more quiet."

The lack of peers that shared the participant's racial background also made the participant state how that made it harder for them to relate to other honors students.

"I don't really have people who I can relate to as much not even just racially but just socially because the people in the Honors College are just not like me. I do feel like if there were more people of my race then I would have more people to connect with just automatically we have something in common and that's our race. So, when I already have a whole bunch of other people who already have something not in common with me and they act how they act and I act a different way, that's a negative thing in my opinion."

The student participant's expressed sentiment of a lack of connection between them and other honors students is not uncommon as Fries-Britt's found in their research that most interactions with other ethnic groups were rarely social interactions and mainly centered around studying or sports (1998).

The student participant also discussed how the Honors college does not do enough to support their interests stating:

“the way they have everything set up they’re only serving like one kind of person and those type of people are in certain types of majors, they’re in certain friend groups, and they’re a certain race usually it’s white.”

The insufficient support that the student feels is because they think that the dominate majority just do not understand the problems and issues that the student participant experiences. The student participant mentioned how other honors students may normalize the fact there are only a couple of African American students in classes and see nothing wrong with it. Even if white honors students or faculty do see an issue with the few number of African American students, the student participant mentioned:

“A lot of times white people feel like they are doing something that’s helping me but they’re just doing the most because they can’t relate, they really just don’t know. So, they do something but I don’t think they get the outcome they expect.”

Feagin and Sikes state, “we need to listen closely to what black American students tell us about what happens to them and how they feel, act, and think (1995).” From this African American Honors College student’s perspective, the overarching theme of feeling disconnected makes it apparent that the Honors College at Ball State falls short in recruiting and retaining additional African American students because there are limited relationships to engage the current African American student similar interests and experiences. The next step for the Ball State’s Honors College is to generate solutions that address the disconnect between the African American honors student and the program.

Generating Possible Solutions

As a university, Ball State has been recognized for their diversity and inclusion initiatives (Ball State receives national award, 2016). Within the Honors College students have observed the lack of ethnic diversity in the honors program and the Student Honors Council took efforts this year to promote discussions about this issue (M. Orchard, personal communication, April 4, 2018). Even shifting the Student Honors Council focus from social programming to function as a space to have these discussions. In email from the Student Honors Council president, they mentioned their attendance at conferences where diversity was a central point of the conversation (M. Orchard, personal communication, April 4, 2018). Outside of these efforts taken by the university and the Student Honors Council, additional solutions are provided below.

1. The Honors College can form a Black Student Honors Council like the Student Honors Council. The Black Student Honors Council will be focused on catering to the needs of African American students and providing them with resources that will help them excel within the honors program. The formation of a Black Student Honors Council will also allow for African American students to meet regularly and see other African American students going through the program along with them. Additionally, the organization can help African American students find at least some people to relate to simple because of their shared ethnic background. Museus in their research states: “a small and growing body of research indicates that at least one type of subculture— ethnic student organizations—can play an important role in positively shaping the experiences and outcomes of racial/ethnic minority students (2008).”
2. The Honors College could also prompt the university to hire more African American professors to teach courses. The average salary for an Honors College professor, based on

the salaries of three Assistant Professor on Ball State's Faculty and Staff Directory and The Star Press Ball State Salaries Database for 2017-2018, would be \$52,244.62.

3. Another thing that the Honors College could do is offer more diversity related courses.

"The classes they [Honors College] have are so limited [and] geared towards English, and psychology. [These classes] are not related to my major but, if they were related to my race I may be more interested in [them]. If they had an African American history one I would rather take that than Greek Mythology which I took that in high school. If they geared more classes towards that (African American related courses) and had more students of color then I think that's what would make it more appealing to people in the program and applying to the program."

Courses that are already established at Ball State that focus on racial/ ethnic diversity could be made required by the Honors College to expand its selection of courses to include courses such as Black History—The United States or Racial and Cultural Minorities in the United States as well as additional courses found on Ball State University's website page focused on diversity:

<http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/institutionaldiversity/students/courses#ethnicDiversity>.

4. Another possible solution for the Honors College is to promote African American events and programs that occur on campus. This would include events for the Black Student Association, Men and Women of Color, Today's Black Women, Impact, and additional organizations that can be found through Ball State's Benny Link page. The student participant observed the fact that within the honors residence hall,

“They don’t have any signs going up especially about black events so that’s the events we went to. We go to black events.”

5. The Honors College could also employ more African American students to work at the front desk or provide tours to future Honors College students. Plus, African American students should be hired to be mentors during the Honors College orientation program. By having African Americans in this role, it gives potential African American honors students the opportunity to see African American students already enrolled in the program. It shows that somebody else like them is doing it so they should maybe do it too.

Other considerations that the Honors College should take into consideration that do not address the problem of engaging African American students relational in the program but would help in recruiting and retaining more African American students are as follows.

1. Provide an alternative way for African American students to apply for the Honors College. While admission into the Honors College is “selective and based on academic achievement, and potential,” having another way for African American students to enter the program other than the two-page application may help in the recruitment process (Apply, n.d.). Alternative solutions could be adding a check box on Ball State’s application for Honors College consideration, an interview with a member of the Honors College staff or automatic admission based on an organizational affiliation. By offering an alternative method for acceptance into the Honors College it takes away another step that high school students have to do when completing college applications.

“[The application is] another step you have to take and applying for colleges is what is really like draining you don’t want to do anything extra. And the fact that

the Honors College application is an extra application that you have to do definitely deters you from doing it. But I had to do it but I know if I didn't have to do I wouldn't have done it all."

My own entry into the Honors College came from me going to the Honors College session during Freshmen Orientation and telling Dr. Ruebel I was a Center for Leadership Development Scholar. Dr. Ruebel then added me into the Honors College system by sending a message to the staff.

2. The Honors College should also highlight more of its benefits. It should do more to articulate to students how the education they receive within the Honors College is going to help them while in college and outside of college. The student participant expressed how the course work felt like extra work that had no relation to their major and were never asked about their honors education during a job interview.

The list of possible solutions generated here are ideas to spark discussion by the Honors College administration to find what will help when they make efforts to recruit and retain African American students. The Honors College should brainstorm further ideas in an environment that encourages all thoughts about possible solutions and then evaluate those solutions.

Evaluating all solutions

When evaluating solutions criteria should be established to decide the best solution (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2016). The criteria the Honors College should follow when evaluating the list of possible solutions are time, cost, and effect. Time because as Ball State prepares its strategic plan for growth for the next five to twenty-five years, the Honors College should develop a strategic plan within in the same timeline to increase the number of African American

students that enroll and graduate from the program. The cost of implementing a solution should be important because if the Honors College cannot afford to implement the solution then it may not be the right one (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2016). Lastly, effect because there should be a way to measure the success of the solution and its impact on the Honors College in regard to the recruitment and retainment of African American students.

1. The development of the Black Honors Council would involve attendance at a workshop to learn how organizations are recognized on campus, development of a constitution and completion of an intent to organize form, as well as, a presentation to the Student Activities Committee that meets once month from September to March excluding December (Start, n.d.). The organization formation process in regard to time would depend on the student organizers and could take as little as month or a full academic year. Funding for this organization to host events and programming could come from the Honors College but there is also funding that can come from the Student Government Association in that when the Black Honors Council first forms, they would be considered a small organization. They would be a small organization because they would have less than thirty members based on current Honors College enrollment of African American students. Lastly, the effect of the Black Honors Council could be measured by organization meeting attendance records. Outside of the criteria, the Black Honors Council would also be able to inform members of ethnic and cultural events on campus and be a way for administration to receive feedback on its progress of meeting African American student needs and interests within the program.

An argument against the formation of the Black Honors Council is that it will separate the African American students from the white students even further creating a divide. Some studies have shown that racial and/or ethnic organizations are good to enhance the individual's identity and leads to greater interest in cross-cultural interactions because there is a support group and a sense of belonging within the campus environment (Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). The formation of the Black Honors Council would also not mean an end to the Student Honors Council. African American students should feel encouraged to attend Student Honors Council meetings however, the Black Honors Council will be assembled as an organization that addresses the needs specifically affecting African American students in the Honors College.

2. If the university does hire an African American professor for the Honors College, the timing now would be ideal as one professor within the Honors College announced their retirement. Ball State's current hiring process involves eleven steps and the amount of time to find the right qualified candidate ranges (Hiring, n.d.). Additionally, there is time spent on training the new professor to welcome them into the community which would range in time. The cost of the situation may not be ideal because the incoming teacher based on the average of the professors in the Honors College would be more than what the retiring professor made. The effect of hiring an African American professor would also be hard to be measured could come through grade reports and teacher evaluations.
3. The time for the Honors College to offer more diversity related courses is now. It is now the time for the Honors College to implement more diversity related courses as part of their curriculum because as Ball State University progresses towards the future

with the Beneficence Pledge as the core of how the university operates, the “we value the intrinsic worth of all community members,” is an important piece to act on. This statement relays the message that Ball State seeks to honor diversity and inclusion on campus by attracting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and student body (Diversity and Inclusion, n.d.). The cost of adding a required diversity course to the Honors College curriculum appears to come with little cost as new honors colloquia are created each year to offer more in-depth study into a topic. The effect of adding a diversity related course into the program can be measured by the enrollment of students in the course and course evaluations. Additionally, offering courses that cover historical, cultural, and social biases of diversity and community allow for more students to interact across racial and other social differences (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

4. Making students more aware within the Honors College about cultural events especially those related to the African American community would take the time of the secretary to prepare dates and times for these events to be placed on calendar that is apparent and visible to students. The promotion of these events would cost ink and paper to print flyers and posters to hang up or no money to send out a list of events within the weekly honors email about what is happening. The effect of such promotions would be hard to measure since the Honors College would not be the ones in charge of the event. However, the Honors College can request the attendance records of the events.
5. The Honors College offers a peer mentor program that allows for upper classmen students to serve as mentors to the incoming freshmen as they begin their journey at

Ball State. Since this program is already in place, there would be minimal time spent on the implementation of hiring more African American students as mentors. The time spent would be on the recruitment and the active seeking of the African American students to apply for the program. The cost of hiring an African American student mentor or worker would be the same as other student wages. The effect of having an African American student worker can be determined by number of students they talk to especially those of African descent.

After evaluating the different solutions, the best decision for the Honors College should be picked.

Deciding on the solution

While the Student Honors Council is channeling a space and a voice for ethnic minorities to be heard, the solution that arises as the best way to solve the problem is the formation of the Black Honors Council. The Black Honors Council can create a community within the Honors College for African American Students to find relationships and develop their identity. The Black Honors Council also allows for African American students to find a common voice and use that voice to share their thoughts and concerns with the Honors College. Additionally, the Black Honors College can help in crossing those cultural barriers and develop relationships with other students in the Honors College to foster understanding about similarities and differences. Plus, the Black Honors College can promote black events hosted on campus and represent the Honors College to prospective students.

Plan on how to implement the solution

To form the Black Honors Council, the Honors College can choose to appoint an African American student as a leader of the initiative and provide them with the necessary resources to

contact and recruit other students as well as a faculty advisor or the Honors College can accept the proposed idea when a student approaches them with the idea. From there, the Black Honors Council must go through the steps listed on the Office of Student Life's page to understand how they can be recognized officially as an organization on Ball State's campus. Once the organization is recognized by the Office of Student Life and their Benny Link has their official roster, the organization can apply for funding through the Student Government Association.

After the organization is established out of the body of African American students currently enrolled in the Honors College, the organization should create tasks and goals for what they would like to achieve as a council especially within their first year. Some tasks suggestion includes further research, presentations, promotions, and event planning. Further research should be done to gather more feedback and information on how the Honors College can do more to recruit and retain African American students. This would include sending out campus wide emails that may reach students who left the Honors College and reaching out to African American alumni of the Honors College. The Black Honors Council should serve as representatives of the Honors College at different events and admission recruitment efforts. To assist in the recruitment efforts may involve the partnership of the Black Honors Council with the Office of Admissions specifically with the office of Diversity, Transfers, and Community Outreach. The role of being a representative for the Honors College should be compensated with at least the minimum wage. African American students within the Honors College should become connected to more people within the larger campus, the Black Honors Council should be aware and promote the different events that are held by black students on campus. To do this, the Black Honors Council can create a GroupMe chat to post flyers, they can print and hang flyers in the Honors' residence hall and they talk to each other and plan to arrive to events together.

Lastly, the Black Honors Council can work with the Student Honors Council to plan events that occur in the Honors College.

The measurement of success for the Black Honors Council would be based on how well they achieve and work on their goals and tasks. Additionally, in the way their organization grows. Attendance should be tracked at each meeting to keep record of the retainment of African American students. Attendance should also be kept at events and programs the Black Honors Council attends or coordinates for retainment purposes. Each year, the organization should see how many freshmen join the organization to find if Ball State's Honors College improved on recruitment. Lastly, the attendance record should show how many African American students graduated and completed the honors program.

Conclusion

David Casey stated that it is important to promote diversity because it fosters creativity and leads to innovation because then people must work through tensions and complexities related to our difference while also focusing on our similarities (2018). By recruiting and retaining African American students the Honors College can create this type of innovative experience on campus. The importance of this body of research is to show how the Honors College can go through the Dewey Reflective Thinking Process, the Honors College to know and solve the problem with their recruitment and retainment of African American students. This thesis established that the problem with the Honors College is the lack of relationships and connections the African American student experiences in the program based on research and an interview with a student in the program. By understanding the problem, solutions were then generated to come up the best solution for the problem. Five solutions were generated from this process as well as two additional suggestions that the Honors College should listen to. The five

solutions were then evaluated based on time, cost, and the effect of implementing the solution.

After the evaluation of each of the five solutions, it was determined the best solution for the Honors College would be to establish a Black Honors Council. The formation of the Black Honors College helps African American students find relationships within the honors program and outside. The organization helps in maintaining records of the recruitment and retainment of African American students and provides a representative body of leaders to represent the Honors College. The Ball State Honors College should accept this thesis with a demand for action to do more in their efforts in the recruitment and retainment of African American students.

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Appendix

Ball State University IRB Exempt Letter



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, IN 47306-0155
Phone: 765-285-5070

DATE: April 2, 2018

TO: Kaia Thompson

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 1213646-1

TITLE: Recruitment and Retainment of African American Students in the Ball State Honors Program

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

DECISION DATE: April 2, 2018

REVIEW TYPE: EXEMPT

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on April 2, 2018 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Exempt Categories:

	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
X	Category 2: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior
	Category 3: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
	Category 4: Research involving the collection of study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or

	if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
	Category 5: Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs.
	Category 6: Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed which contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Editorial Notes:

1. Approved with signed consent

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact (ORI Staff) if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

D. Clark Dickin, PhD/Chair
Institutional Review Board

Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/
Director
Office of Research Integrity

Research Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Kaia Thompson and I am an Undergraduate student working under the supervision of Professor Eric Harvey in the Honors College at Ball State University. The reason that I am contacting you is that for my Honors Senior Thesis Project, I am conducting a qualitative study that examines the unique stories and experiences of African American/Black Honors students, and I am looking for individuals who are interested in sharing their experiences. I am currently seeking volunteers who self-identify as African American/Black members of the Honors College and between the ages of 18-21.

Participation in this study involves being a part of a focus group with other students that identify as African American/Black Honors students. During the focus group, students will be asked about their Honors College involvement and the benefits and challenges they face that work to shape their overall experience as an Honors student of color at Ball State University. Participation in this study will take approximately 1.5 hours. In appreciation of your time commitment, you will receive light refreshments. The study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Ball State University Institutional Review Board (# 1213646). However, the final decision about participation is yours.

The focus group will take place on Monday, April 9, 2018 at TBD PM.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at kcthompson@bsu.edu confirming your interest and availability to participate at the time included above. I will then send a follow-up email indicating that you have been signed up and provide you with further information concerning the location of the study. If you have to cancel your appointment, please email with at least 48 hour or more notice, at kcthompson@bsu.edu.

If you have additional questions, or would like more information please email me at kcthompson@bsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Kaia Thompson

Focus Group Detail Email

Hello!

Thank you for expressing your interest in being a part of my Senior Thesis research study focused on how Ball State University can do more to recruit and retainment African American students in their Honors program.

The focus group will be taking place on this Friday, April 9, 2018 at TBDPM in Location TBA. Prepare for the session to conclude around TBDPM, at the latest. Light refreshments will be served.

I am very excited about your participation and I look forward to working with you all soon!

If you have any questions and or concerns. Please feel free to contact me.

I will see you all on Friday!

Thank you,

Kaia Thompson
kcthompson@bsu.edu

Interview Questions

1. Reflecting on your overall experience, what benefits have you experienced as an Honors Student that are connected to your racial identity?
2. Reflecting on your overall experience, what challenges have you experienced as an Honors Student that are connected to your racial identity?
3. How do you feel The Honors College supports you in regards to your racial identity?
4. What can you identify as external barriers that prevent African American/Black and other underrepresented students from participating in the Honors Program?
5. Focusing on The Honors College student population, what can/have Honors students do/done to openly promote diversity and inclusion?
6. In what ways, if any, do you feel The Honors College could improve when it comes to recruiting and retaining individuals from minority racial backgrounds?
7. Is there anything else anyone would like to share?

Informed Consent Form

The person in charge of this study is Kaia Thompson a Communication Studies student at Ball State University. Throughout this form, this person will be referred to as the "investigator." Her faculty advisor is Professor Eric Harvey.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the undergraduate collegiate level, Black Honors student experience by exploring the impact of racial differences on the honors student experience so that Ball State Honors College can do a better job at recruiting and retaining Black students

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Students must identify as African American or Black, they must be enrolled in the Honors College currently, and between the ages of 18 – 24

Exclusion Criteria: People not eligible for the study are any who identify as other than African American or Black, students not currently enrolled in the Honors College, and anyone outside of the ages of 18 - 24

What will happen if I participate in this study?

Participation in this study involves: Attending a focus group lasting approximately 1.5 hours. The focus group will involve up to 7 research participants and the investigator. You are asked only to use your first name in the focus group.

We would like to audio record you for this study. If you are audio recorded, it will be possible to identify you through your voice. If you agree to be audio recorded, sign the appropriate line at the bottom of this form. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure location for the duration of the study.

What are the anticipated risks for participation?

The primary risk of participation in this study is a potential loss of confidentiality. Protocol is in place to ensure participant confidentiality is maintained to the best of our abilities. Information will be kept confidential by not collecting any identifiable information and by only using first names during the focus groups. The audio recordings will be transcribed within one month of the focus group and then destroyed upon publication of the thesis. Participants' names will be coded in transcribing. The investigator will also ask participants not to tell anyone outside of the group about anything that was said during the group session. Participants also will be informed that the researcher cannot guarantee that participants will keep the discussions private.

Some of the focus group questions are personal in nature and may make you feel uncomfortable. Participants can also refuse to answer questions and decide to withdraw from the study at any time. A list of campus and community resources will be shared with participants whose discussion of potentially emotionally triggering and sensitive issues might necessitate further professional intervention and support.

Are there any benefits to participating?

You will not directly benefit from participating in this research.

Benefits to society include gaining a further understanding of the experiences of self-identified Black students participating in Ball State University's Honors College.

What are the alternatives to participation?

The alternative is not to participate.

How will my information be kept confidential?

We will keep your information confidential by not collecting any identifiable information and only using first names during the focus group. The audio recordings will be transcribed within one month of the focus group and then destroyed following publication. Your name will be coded in transcribing the audio recordings, at which point all of your information will be anonymous. The focus group transcripts will be stored in password-protected computer files, and audio recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet until they are destroyed. We will make every effort to keep your research information confidential.

The investigators will ask you and the other people in the group to use only first names during the focus group session. The investigators will also ask you not to tell anyone outside of the group about anything that was said during the group session. However, we cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussions private.

Other groups may have access to your research information for quality control or safety purposes. These groups include, the sponsor of the research, or federal and state agencies that oversee the review of research.

The results of this research will be shared at conferences and used to inform The Honors College. Identifiable information will not be used for these purposes.

Storing study information for short-term use

We would like to store your information from this study for short term use. Your information will be labeled with a code and not your name. Your information will be stored in a password-protected or locked file. Please initial below whether or not you allow us to store your information until the date of publication:

_____ Yes _____ No

Are there any costs to participation?

Participation will not cost you anything.

Will I be paid for participation?

You will receive light refreshments for your participation in this research study.

Risks or Discomforts

There is the risk of you losing your right confidentiality being that there is no guarantee that members once outside of the focus group will keep information to themselves about the study. You might also experience slight discomfort in talking about experience that may have been painful for you.

Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study

Ball State Counseling Center

Lucina Hall, room 320

Muncie, IN 47306

Hours: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

Phone: 765-285-1736

Still Waters Professional Counseling

1904 W Royale Dr.

Muncie, IN 47304

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

Phone: 765-284-0043

Study contact information

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Kaia Thompson, at kcthompson@bsu.edu or by phone at (317) 518-8062.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this research study is your choice. You may refuse to participate at any time, even after signing this form, with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled including your Honors College membership and BSU academic standing. If you leave the study, the information you provided will be kept confidential. You may request, in writing, that your identifiable information be destroyed. However, we cannot destroy any anonymous information that has already been published.

Statement of Consent

I have read this form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and am satisfied with the answers I received. I give my consent to participate in this research study regarding the impact of racial differences on the Honors student experience at Ball State University.

Signatures

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio recorded for this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Investigator Obtaining Consent

I have explained the research to the subject and answered all his/her questions. I will give a copy of the signed consent form to the subject.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date